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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Daniel Lord. Esq

A

VALEDICTORY

DELIVERED AT

THE FORUM

ON

THE ELEVENTH DAY OF APRIL, 1817,

ON

Closing the First Session.

BY I. P. C. SAMPSON, ESQ.

NEW-YORK:

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1817.

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Sir,

In pursuance of a resolution unanimously passed at the last meeting of the Forum, we have the honour, in behalf of the Association, to express to you their thanks for your interesting and eloquent Valedictory Address, and to request a copy for publication.

Permit us also, on this occasion, to express our high sense of the services you have rendered an institution, in the establishment of which, you bore a principal part, and to the reputation of which, your talents have so largely contributed.

With sentiments of esteem and personal friendship,

we remain

your obedient servants,

SAMUEL BERRIAN,
ANSEL W. IVES,
BENJ. HAIGHT,
O. L. HOLLY.

I. P. C. Sampson, Esq.

Gentlemen,

The complimentary expressions in your communication are so far beyond my deserts, that you will permit me to receive them, without reply, merely as the courtesy of the occasion.

To have suggested the idea of the Forum is the only merit I can claim. Its reputation has been wholly owing to the talents and exertions of the members composing the Association.

I have,

Gentlemen,

the honour to remain

your most obedient humble servant,

I. P. C. SAMPSON.

Messrs. Berrian, Ives, Haight, and Holly.

VALEDICTORY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE been called on to perform a task which could have been more ably executed by many of my fellow members. They have preferred humble zeal to more distinguished claims. I am not insensible to the kindness of their partiality; but, as the effect of that kindness alone, must beg leave to accept the honour they have done me.

The object of our institution has been the cultivation of eloquence. I shall not enter into any argument to prove the dignity, or the utility, of the pursuit. It is the noblest gift that can distinguish man from man; nor is there any greatness so thoroughly inherent in the individual who possesses it. In a free country it is power; and they who have eloquence carry with them, wherever they may go, the means of empire over their fellow men. In the pulpit, at the bar, or in the senate, we find them equally irresistible, rousing the feelings, rebuking the passions, swaying the minds, and controlling the convictions of mankind.

In the pulpit, eloquence is seen, not in the vain pomp of words, not in the glare of ornament, but in the holy ministry of comfort, or the solemn exposition of a providence, damping the hardened brow of guilt, and extorting from the heart a testimony to its own corruptions. What subject can be capable of a more sublime effect than the religion that preaches liberty to the captive, and consolation to the distressed—that promises life in death, and, raising the eye of hope to heaven, dispenses the message of salvation to every condition, and to every clime. With how moving an appeal does it plead the cause of helpless infancy, or destitute old age, searching the bosom for every string that can be touched to pity, and bringing the gush of sympathy from the unfeeling heart, like water from the rock in the wilderness.

When we behold the sacred orator detailing to his listeners the consolations of their faith, and the foundations of their hope, how full of wo the accents in which he depicts the agony and the sacrifice; but when he celebrates the triumph and the victory, what holy fervour kindles in his eye, what joyful rapture dwells upon his tongue. His countenance becomes enlightened with his hopes; heaven seems to open above his head the glory of the throne to be revealed. The heart melts

into tenderness, and the spirit of the dove, descending upon our understandings, brings with it in its wings the sublime emotions of a mysterious faith.

But when he discourses on the uncertainty of life, which, like a ripple on the stream, vanishes on the eye while yet its murmur lingers in the ear, how awfully does he present the solemn hour when the last agony of nature closes—the dews of dissolution stand gathering on the brow, and life flutters feebly in the expiring pulse. The distracted eye seems to inquire into the awful uncertainty before it—the agonizing hand grasps at the slightest thrill of sympathy, and the ear dwells upon the lightest breath that whispers mercy. Then, when every earthly trust is rent, and the drop of bitterness runs trickling over the soul, a voice is heard—the sinner listens—doubt and despair relax their grasp. Another pang—the throes of anguish cease—the darkness melts to light—a ray of mercy has found the soul struggling in the shadows of death—joy spreads along the features—the dimming eye beams with celestial hope—life is absorbed in a new existence, and the spirit feels the veil of mortality dropping fast from around it—the dying man sinks away in visions of eternal life, and the immortal spirit, rising

on the exulting wings of hope, springs through the boundless skies to meet her God.

At the bar, we find eloquence vindicating the cause of justice, upholding the widow's right, and sheltering the unprotected helplessness of the orphan's cradle. A sword to the oppressor, a shield to the oppressed—the poor find in her a refuge against the power of the rich. Vice crouches in her eye, nor dares to raise her head beneath the uplifted scourge, while the guilty delinquent, writhing, pale, confused, stands self-condemned and trembling at her look.

At times, it is true, her voice may be drowned by the chattering jargon of the obscene harpies of chicane; but her triumph, though interrupted, cannot be withstood. Still she is seen wielding all the affections of the heart, marshalling them all on the side of virtue, and leading forth innocence in triumph from the throne of justice. When she pleads the cause of injured virtue, the desert home, the vanished smile, the fading form, how breathless the suspense. Emotion swells upon emotion. The tide of feeling rises till it overflows its fountains. In the undissembled sympathy of distress, the tear runs trickling down our cheek, and the heart swells to bursting with indignation at the villain's guilt.

In the senate, eloquence assumes a graver aspect. We behold her leading the councils of nations, and imprinting her sentences as axioms on the minds of men. Inspired by her, the statesman is seen silencing the clamours of factious tongues, and warning the public ministers into the path of duty. When he rises in the midnight debate every eye is fixed, every ear listens. Wearied attention fastens on his words. By degrees, attention becomes astonishment, astonishment conviction. His hearers wonder at their former doubts; till, as he rises to the meridian of his eloquence, they lose themselves in transport and enthusiasm. The lofty spirit of independence is kept alive by his words; the feeling of national honour kindles at his accents; and when the sky is compacted into gloom, when the voice of nature's strife mutters among the mountains, and the warring surge swells threatening on the shore, undisturbed and undismayed, he stands a fearless pilot at the helm, and rises with the wave, and rides upon the storm.

But if we wish to contemplate the full triumph of eloquence, we must behold her in words on which freedom flings her breath, beseeching, threatening, animating; summoning nations to independence, and calling on them to shroud the

memory of their shame in the palms of glory. At her voice, the trance of slavery ends. Drooping humanity rears her head. The slave becomes the man. The burning tear stands brimming in his eye. The electric flash runs kindling through his soul. The tomb sends forth a voice. The living wake to the remembrance of the glorious sires whom time has heaped in honored dust. The heart of the nation renews itself, and becomes one, in the universal sympathy; and the people, delirious with the draught of freedom, rush to destroy the hideous idols, on whose altars they had passed their children through the fire. Then, indeed, her breath is flame, and her words lightning, withering and scorching where they fall. It is then, that with swelling bosom bared to the storm, she stands invoking the judgments of heaven in fiery wrath upon the oppressor's head, and speaks the ban of desolated nature on the destroyer's triumph.

Eloquence is not of one age or country; she has spoken with every tongue, and to every people. Nature inspires the unlettered native of the woods, and the feelings of his mind are represented under the images she presents. Joy is the beam that cheers his prospect; sorrow the cloud that darkens over his path. He hears a spirit in the roar of the cataract, and imagines a heaven

beyond his mountains. In perpetual communion with nature, he is familiar with every aspect she assumes, but loves her most in awful converse with the storm, when the clouds darken on the driving winds, when the forest groans, and the desert prowlers, stealing to their lairs with couched heads, await the pouring wrath of heaven.

Such an unrestrained communion with nature gives an habitual elevation to their thoughts. When Tecumseh was told in council, that his white father presented him a seat, he exclaimed, "Your chief my father! My father is the sun, and on the bosom of the earth, who is my mother, will I throw myself!"

Nor is eloquence only to be seen habited in the civil gown: often when the marshalled hosts are ranged beneath the lowering sky of battle, she is seen to flash amid the gloom, and give an omen to the fight. Soldiers! Forty ages of glory behold you from the summits of those pyramids! At that voice victory seemed to speak, and when the sun of Austerlitz rose on the heights of Mojaisk, the humblest soldier in the ranks acknowledged a dawn of glory, and received the augury of battle.

The triumphs of the orator are not confined to his own age alone. His words have a memory in them that long preserves the recollection of the struggle made for freedom, and gives the triumph to the conquered, and brands the tyrant to posterity. Still we catch from Demosthenes the glowing spirit that animated Greece; still learn from Cicero to execrate the mean ambition that triumphed over the liberties of Rome. And if a tear have trickled to our eyes, or an honest glow kindled in our bosoms, at the perusal, our hearts are enlarged and ennobled by the sympathy.

It is true, eloquence seems to have changed her character in modern times; but the difference between ancient and modern audiences easily accounts for this. With them oratory was more a matter of show, and spoke more to the senses; their climate, their living so much abroad, their speaking in the open air, their greater sensibility to external impressions, their dress, the picturesque grandeur of the public buildings amidst which they spoke, the more perceptible melody of their language, the complexity of its syntax, rendering composition more difficult, and the relish for its felicities more exquisite, all combined to give it this character. In modern times, from

the more philosophical spirit of the age, we take bolder views, and touch upon greater topics. Less capable of external sensations, our moral impressions are deeper and more lasting. To these causes may be added, the nature of our religion, the romantic character of our early literature and traditions, and our greater familiarity with intellectual ideas and abstractions. Our knowledge of the literature of other nations, and our transfusion of their idioms into our own, permits us to take greater liberties with our style, and to practise bolder innovations upon our language. With a greater range of knowledge, we have a richer variety of objects of illustration. Our imaginations are much better stored with images, whether of the interesting occasions that history presents, or the imposing grandeur of the scenes of nature. To all this may be added, that they were more recent in the world, and that objects that wore to them the inspiring freshness of novelty, assume in our eyes the sombrer hue of disappointment. In these later days, the imagination, in wandering through the twilight solitudes of time, is arrested by a thousand gray ruins breathing melancholy through the mind, in the associations they call up of vanished greatness and departed splendour.

Still, with some slight modifications, true eloquence is everywhere the same. The true orator is found in every community, and everywhere to be known by the same characteristics. The great orator is the great man of real life, and born for action. His imagination is not the fancy of the poet, nor like it loves to repose among its own visions; nor his understanding like the mind of the philosopher, delighting in speculation, and satisfied with doubts for conclusions. A daring spirit, a decisive will, give impulse to the convictions of his mind. His arguments may be like the bow of Ulysses in the hands of common men, but in his own impel the shaft to the feather in the mark. The whole character of his mind is vehement reason. His eloquence is not the display of sentiment, or the subtilty of disputation, but the burst of feeling, and the flash of mind that carries conviction. Ingenuity, which is the strength of weak minds, and acuteness, which is the pride of cunning ones, he disdains, and spurns a petty triumph. His true characteristic is force, and he delights to exert it; like the tempest, swelling and rising with the roar of the chafed elements. The reed may wanton with the sun, and dally with the breeze; the oak stiffens to the storm, and takes root in the whirlwind. He trusts not to the glow of his colours, but

the boldness of his outline, and does not wait to finish minutely, but, like the painter, flings his brush at the picture, and calls out resemblance from the canvass at a single touch. He stands erect among his fellows, and feels himself born to enforce conviction, and assumes by the right of conquest, and dictates submission. Ever ardent, and like a rich stream conflowing with his own abundance, he tramples on the little difficulties of debate. He does not seek to delight his hearers, but to hurry them into action. Doubt and hesitation vanish at his look, feebler minds pay homage to the energy of his character, and, clinging to his protection, take their opinions from his eye, and acquire courage in the thunders of his voice. The tragic passions, terror and pity, are the springs of his eloquence. Inaccessible to any but the loftiest impulses of our nature, he ever assumes the noblest sentiments as furnishing motives to action. The softer feelings he knows only to describe them, and calls forth tears from other men, but sheds none himself. He portrays humanity in her greatest attitudes, and seizes nature in her grandest aspects. He does not go in pursuit of tropes or figures, but presents his thoughts in images, because more rapid and concise than words. With him declamation is argument warmed by passion; at one time exhibiting the march of a

majestic stream, at another the roar of an impetuous torrent. He is not eloquent upon every occasion, nor does he treat an indifferent subject with emphatic monotony, or fill up the pauses of argument or passion with tiny flourishes of rhetoric, but rises with his subject; and when the debate swells into tempest, shows the storm to be his element, and an arm to wield the thunderbolt.

GENTLEMEN OF THE FORUM,

On taking leave of you, permit me to congratulate you on the success of our institution. To speak of the talents it has called forth, after what we have heard to-night, would be superfluous. To enumerate all, would be impossible; to particularize, invidious. There are names among you that pronounce their own panegyric.

We may, on closing our session, say, with honest pride, that, on the place from which I speak, important questions have been discussed, truth has found advocates, and prejudice been refuted. We have not sacrificed the permanent interests, or future utility, of the institution, to any selfish consideration of individual vanity. No petty jealousy, no envious meanness, no unworthy art, no rivalry but generous emulation, no inter-

course but liberality; we have sincerely sympathized with each other's success.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

The attempts we have made this winter we consider merely as experiment, and the patronage we have received as far beyond our deserts. We come now to render up our trust in the institution. It has not existed for our own emolument. It was meant for the public. We thank you for your liberality. The spirit displayed in supporting this institution, permit me to say it, augurs favourably for New-York. It leads us to anticipate the time when, rising to her level in the union, she will be no less the seat of science than the great mart of trade. One topic you will allow me to touch upon. Our institution has been the means of dispensing your bounty to the orphan and the widow. If, then, the tear of human misery has been wiped away from a suffering eye, if comfort has been shed on the infirmities of old age, if smiles have been called up on the cheek of honest poverty, or joy diffused through the languid pulses of the captive, I put it boldly to you, associated on such principles, are we not entitled to your support.

On this occasion I feel that there are claims on the part of a portion of our audience, not to be passed over. I do not make this address for the purpose of idle compliment, but because the obligation has been felt, and we wish to acknowledge it. Sincerely do we feel our obligation to those whom we have ever considered as the real patrons of our institution—whose influence in society first gave reputation to our establishment —whose presence has supplied a motive to our exertions—an interest to our debates, and, by imposing a salutary restraint, elevated the character of our discussions. Night after night, we have seen intelligence, beauty, and fashion, in brilliant array among our audience. We have, also, seen that respectable class of the community who could scarcely have been attracted by a merely idle curiosity, countenancing and giving character to our institution by their presence.

It is time that prejudices, implicitly received only because unexamined, should be abandoned. The reunion of the two sexes, in the pursuits of knowledge, will be for the benefit of both. The gloomy pedant will be fashioned into refinement, the glittering female recalled from vain frivolities to the station of a thinking being. Nor is this impossi-

ble. True wisdom ever loves to sport in smiles; wit may sparkle from a laughing eye, and knowledge abandon furrowed brows for dimpled cheeks. Beauty itself scarce attracts our homage till expression sparkle in the eye, the soul of feeling kindle on the lip, and the smile of intelligence irradiate the countenance with the expression of a mind.

At all times, literature is an innocent amusement; in adversity, a never failing refuge. At what source can we draw a purer consolation than at the fountain of knowledge, whose limpid wave leaves no repenting bitterness on the lip, and on whose mirror virtue beholds her own image reflected pure as its untroubled waters. To female superintendance is committed the important task of giving a direction to the first ideas that call forth the expanding intellect, and warm the opening heart; and when the infant has grown up into the man, to whom can he look for the communion of mind but those without whom happiness is a dream, and the world a desert; whose idea comes associated in the mind with every hue of beauty and every breath of melody; and whom the imagination delights to picture forth, pure as the timid flowret, glimmering in the star dew; meek as the wild rose, bending and blushing to its

image in the mountain stream; sweet as the opening violet, breathing incense on the morning's breath, or shedding fragrance on the sigh of evening.

Our bolder virtues require the glow of public life, and are nourished in the broad light of day. Theirs are seen to most advantage by the mild moonlight of domestic life, which gives a softening grace to every beauty it reveals. But without the charm of mind, the interest of cultivated intellect, and the smile of polished intelligence, what were even home itself. The accomplished female, on the other hand, becomes the ornament of the social circle; the best affections of the heart shed the air of paradise around her; the smile spreads from cheek to cheek around the happy hearth; the voice of prattling innocence dispels the gloom of care, while the fond voice of affection, thrilling to the heart, awakens every sympathy with which nature has connected happiness. It is in scenes like these that the heart is formed to virtue; and to the cultivation of the female intellect alone must we look to enjoy them. Blessed with such endearments, fortune may yield or withhold her smiles, but the mental sunshine beaming at the heart she cannot overcast; and in the darkest hour of adversity, there yet remains the faithful asylum of a

wife's embrace, the partial fondness of a mother's smile.

I cannot think it necessary, on this occasion, to say any thing of the inducements that should furnish motives to the study of eloquence. In this country, the necessity of public speaking is not confined to any particular class of men; every man may be called to the councils of the nation; any man may address his fellow citizens.

A republic is the true soil of eloquence. It is a plant that cannot flourish beneath the jealous shade of power. Its stem must draw vigour from a free soil, and its blossoms derive their fragrance from the chartered airs of heaven, and their beauty from the unintercepted light of day. Eloquence does not deign to impart her energies to the timorous tongues or faltering accents of slaves, and if she has spoken amongst them, it has been only where the throb of nature distended for a moment the heart of the oppressed, and swelled against his chains and burst his bonds.

When we consider the destinies of our country, we cannot doubt that on her soil eloquence will assert her genuine empire; the interests of freedom shall animate our debates, and the glory of

her achievements prompt the heart and inspire the tongue. On these shores the genius of independence, like the cherub with the flaming sword, shall guard the tree of liberty, while the arts and sciences shall spring beneath its branches, and bloom to repay its shade. Man shall rise to his rank in the creation; his mind, undebased by prejudice, and uncorrupted by ignorance, shall display all its powers. Truth shall no longer lie hid in fiction, but revealing herself to eyes accustomed to her radiance, lay all her secrets open to the calm research of reason. The muses shall settle on our shores, and often exiled, like their last abode the best; and wreathing every bud of science with every bloom of art, twine the imperishable garland round the brows of Columbia, and bid them exhale their sweets to a long and late posterity. Literature shall refine without corrupting; her spotless page, pure as the silver chord upon her lyre, the vestal flame upon her altar. The poet shall aspire to heaven, and snatch from the roll of fame the name of the hero to burn along his glowing verse. Marble hewed from native quarries shall rise in monuments above the brave, or chiseled by the hand of art, transmit to posterity, in frowning majesty, the features of the hero or the patriot. The gloomy forest shall yield to the sturdy stroke; the voice of gladness waken in the

wild, and nature smile to yield up her treasures to the hand of toil. The light of glory shall pour in floods of day along our land. While nature spreads her verdure on the plains of Bridgewater or Chippewa; while Niagara thunders from the steep, our triumphs shall have a memory; and while ocean rolls his waves, shall slumber in the calm and lighten in the storm.

Then shall eloquence display all her powers. Virtue shall hear a triumph in her voice. Its thunders shall roll terror over the head of guilt, and its lightnings flash dismay upon the eye of faction. Then shall our country's triumphs be sounded forth in strains, glorious as the trump of heaven, and her wrongs inspire advocates, whose every vein shall thrill with patriotism, whose every pulse shall beat true to national honour, whose every thought shall rise swelling from the heart, and come glowing to the lip. A greener verdure shall spread over the warrior's wreath, a purer lustre tremble in the tear that consecrates the hero's memory; and while with rapid tongue she pours forth the eloquence of thought, and the oratory of the soul, the pulse shall beat quicker in the veins, and a bolder lustre in the eye proclaim the awakened energies of the heart.

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